

Plain View



Operating with keys to success

This month we chose the Kisling operation as our Grower of the Month. Kent Kisling and his family illustrate many keys of success about farming 6,500 acres just below the Kansas border in Burlington, OK.

By Shanna Boyett, OSU Agricultural Communications, and Tommy Puffinbarger, Alfalfa County Extension Educator

You may remember your grandparents telling stories of

growing up and working on the family farm. The more recent stories involve farms turning from family to corporate. Well, who says the farm can't be a successful agribusiness that still includes the whole family?

Kent and Darcy Kisling live and farm in Burlington, OK., just below the Kansas border. The operation is a partnership among Kent and his wife, Darcy, and Darcy's two sons, Matt and John Schupbach. Darcy helps keep the books, and the whole family gets a dose of fun at harvest time. The farm includes about 6,500 acres of farmland and grassland with crops like wheat, milo, soybeans, corn and alfalfa. It also includes a cow/calf operation as well as stocker cattle. Its crop rotations are constantly changing depending on the economics each year. Around half of this is no-till land.

The operation hasn't experienced any advantage of no-till over conventional in terms of yields or overall crop profitability, though Kent said a big reason for moving in the no-till direction is the low amount of labor. Another advantage is the lower machinery costs. Although they recently bought a new sprayer and air seeder to increase no-till, they didn't find them more expensive than equipment costs associated with traditional farmland. The fuel used with their no-till fields is considerably less than that with the traditional fields.

The family attends the "No-Till On The Plains" conference on no-till practices, and it attends Alfalfa County Cooperative Extension meetings to stay informed. Other keys to success include artificially inseminating their cattle and leasing their bulls. Both Matt and John have certified custom applicator's licenses and keep up-to-date on

chemicals for croplands. Kent also feels communication is important. They have family meetings often to discuss the farm. The most important key to Kent is to try something new every year.

"We try to do something new every year. Sometimes that new stuff works and sometimes it doesn't. If it works then we expand on it," he said.

One example is a Global Positioning System (GPS) on one of the tractors and sprayers. Kent also has a working relationship with the USDA-ARS Areawide Pest Management project team.


"The folks in Stillwater really got me out of a bind this past winter," said Kisling. "They really helped out with neighbor relations."

When using some volunteer wheat for grazing, a neighbor asked whether the wheat might harbor high numbers of wheat curl mites, the vector for wheat streak mosaic virus. The AWPM team monitors those mites as a part of the project and confirmed a very low number of mites were present in the field.

Also, Kent found in cooperating with AWPM, he can compare his earlier soil tests to those taken by the research team. Samples are routinely taken, and results are passed to growers.

With an operation this size, primarily run by family members, there is little room for outside activities. The family's fun is found working closely with each other daily and sharing good times together.

They are involved in the community. Matt and John are both volunteer firemen. Kent is on the co-op board at Kiowa, Kansas. Kent and Darcy also enjoy spending time with their grandkids on 4-H trail rides. For more about the Kislings, please visit our Web site.



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We are Areawide Pest Management for Wheat, a five-year project developed by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, to demonstrate pest management practices for the Russian wheat aphid and greenbug. Our main goal is to collaborate with wheat producers in evaluating and demonstrating non-chemical pest management techniques, with particular emphasis on the management of the Russian wheat aphid and the greenbug. The elements of our program include:

- *Crop Diversification*
- *Variety Selection*
- *Field Monitoring and biocontrol*
- *Best Management practices for Wheat*

Staying in touch...

The Kislings said a major key to their success is communication. They communicate with one another in addition to keeping up with issues and innovations. "It's easy to get into a rut," Kisling said. "Keeping up-to-date puts you just a little bit ahead of the ones that don't." To learn more about the Kislings, please visit our Web site.



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Areawide Pest Management for Wheat
Management of Russian wheat aphids and greenbugs
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